In these challenging times, we often find people and matters that tend to distract our attention from the really important matters at hand. I will not enter the arena of politics any further than to quote the singer Roger Whittaker on politicians: “Politicians are like a bunch of bananas; they hang in a bunch; they are all yellow and there is not a straight one amongst them”. This is said tongue in cheek as we all hold some politicians in high esteem.

This discussion is not about the politics behind the riots, nor is it about the actions (or inaction) of cabinet ministers, it is about our colleagues. It is about family in pharmacy.

It was heartbreaking to see and hear the tales of looting, burning and danger to life and limb that our colleagues in the affected areas experienced. It was important to hear the experiences that our colleagues had and to try and understand the devastation they feel after losing the practice they have built with sweat and toil in service of the same community that looted, burnt and threatened them!

We have heard of many public sector pharmacists who continued to serve communities throughout the unrest, irrespective of personally being in danger. We have heard of hospital staff staying behind at the facilities and pleading with the rioters not to burn the facility!

Where do we as a family stand? Do we say “Thank God” that we were spared (yes, we should!), but do we offer support to our brothers and sisters who were not so fortunate? Do we judge the misguided looters ever so harshly, but still support the cynical politicians behind this whole plot?

It is not our job to judge, nor is it our job to figure out if somebody deserves something. Our job is to lift the fallen, restore the broken and to help heal the hurting. Let us all dig deep and give with an open heart in support of those who lost everything.

Every time such an atrocious event occurs in our beautiful country, we see hoards of citizens wishing to emigrate, but as Abraham Lincoln said: “We can complain because rose bushes have thorns or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses”. Often in life, we do not only get the beauty and bounty life offers, most of the time it is a bit of a mixed deal, however, there is always plenty to be thankful for.

We cannot wait for someone else to change our country, we need to initiate and become the change we want to see. No matter what the challenge, never let your emotion get in the way of your intelligence.

Let us take hands as a pharmacy family and let us help those who were devastated by the riots. As the professional organisation representing the majority of pharmacists in the country, the PSSA supports the Pharmacy Fund established by ICPA in support of pharmacies who fell victim to the riots.

Let us heal the wounds inflicted and let us progress, united as family in pharmacy.